



New Compliance Assistance Initiative

Department of Natural Resources fact sheet

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The B2 vision for the Department of Natural Resources

During the past year, Director Childers has worked closely with his staff on a new design for the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. The department can be compared to the history of the B52 and B2 airplanes. Fifty years separate the technologies of the two planes. The B52 cannot handle the responsibilities of the B2 in today's world, even with all the changes and upgrades to its original design.

The Department of Natural Resources wants to take its human and other resources and become an outstanding success in the world of modern technology. The agency's leadership team believes it can transform its B52 into a new B2 model by fully utilizing the knowledge and skills of senior members and moving into new technologies and skills.

New Compliance Assistance Initiative makes vision a reality

In November 2005, the Department of Natural Resources launched a new Compliance Assistance Initiative. This new initiative reflects the department's new way of doing business, with an increased emphasis on customer service and bringing departmental resources closer to the citizens we serve.

Below you will find additional information on the core pieces of the Compliance Assistance Initiative: initial assistance visits, the ombudsman program, expanded satellite offices and improvements to state environmental permitting and enforcement processes.

Initial Assistance Visits

Initial assistance visits help citizens, facilities understand requirements of their environmental permits

In November 2005, the Department of Natural Resources launched a new compliance assistance initiative to assist citizens, communities and businesses that receive permits, licenses, certifications and registrations from the department and to improve environmental compliance.

In the first phase of the new initiative, the department visited land disturbance sites, newly permitted air sources, drinking water facilities where permit actions were anticipated, limestone quarries and hazardous waste generators. The department walked permit holders through their unique permit requirements and provide compliance assistance rather than conduct formal inspections.

The department's goal was to enhance environmental compliance by assisting permitted facilities that have not had a previous visit or inspection. Because this was not a formal

inspection, compliance assistance was provided with the expectation that corrections would be made if any problems were discovered. The department would initiate formal enforcement actions if violations of a very serious nature were found. Very serious violations are those that are immediately or imminently harmful to human health or the environment, such as a hazardous waste release.

The Missouri Department of Natural Resources completed more than 180 initial assistance visits during the first phase of the new initiative. The department visited 188 land disturbance sites, newly permitted air sources, drinking water facilities, limestone quarries and hazardous waste generators that receive permits, licenses, certifications and registrations from the agency. Walking permit holders through their unique permit requirements and providing compliance assistance, rather than conducting formal inspections, is how initial assistance visits work.

The department's visits found no concerns at 56 percent of the facilities visited. For the remaining 44 percent, most problems were of a non-critical nature, and the department provided on site assistance to those facilities about how to correct those concerns.

Of the facilities with concerns to the department, only 1 percent had very serious violations. Because of the potential for harm to human health and the environment, the department stopped the initial assistance visit and began a formal inspection of the two facilities with very serious violations. The Department of Natural Resources issued these facilities Notices of Violation and directed them to fix the violations within the timeframe specified by state law.

An initial assistance visit differs from an inspection in several ways. It is voluntary, always scheduled and focuses on the permit holder understanding the permit rather than the department checking only for compliance. Department of Natural Resources' inspectors go over the permit requirements with the facility operator, view operations and provide feedback, guidance documents and other helpful information to the permit holder. Department staff also provide training about required sampling, record keeping, operations and maintenance if necessary. Areas where the facility has good performance as well as areas of concern are discussed.

Initial assistance visits became standard practice in January 2006 for the Department of Natural Resources. The department is surveying the facilities that participated in the initial phase of the compliance assistance visits to learn more about areas where it can improve its services. In addition, the department is pursuing other improvements to its permitting and enforcement processes.

Detailed information about the department's procedures for initial assistance visits is available in its Field Services Division Operations Manual, which is available online at www.dnr.mo.gov/services/opsmanual.htm.

Permit Efficiencies

The Department of Natural Resources is committed to a new strategy of simplifying the permit process while improving the environment through follow-up visits with permit holders. Traditionally, considerable effort has been invested in writing very protective permits; however, many permit recipients have never been visited to ensure that they understand the permit and are following the permit conditions.

The department has cut the time to issue some of its permits in half over the past year. Also, the agency is working to make the permit process easier and more accessible to Missouri citizens and businesses through the use of eServices, www.dnr.mo.gov/eservices.htm.

The department anticipates that citizens will be able to fill out electronic forms for dry cleaner registrations, petroleum storage tanks registrations, open burning of vegetative waste and hazardous waste generator ID numbers in early 2006. This first step in electronic submission will also help speed up the permitting process for citizens and businesses.

Forms for more complex permits are online, and the department is currently receiving feedback on how to improve this process for citizens and businesses. The agency is also working to make its permit manuals available to the public online.

Ombudsman Program

Ombudsmen reach out to local communities to improve environmental compliance

The Department of Natural Resources' ombudsmen have made about 1,000 contacts with citizens, community officials and businesses since September 2005. The department put the ombudsmen in place this fall in an effort to improve environmental compliance and customer service to Missouri citizens.

"The ombudsmen are learning about minor frustrations folks have with the department," said Department of Natural Resources Director Doyle Childers. "Serving as my eyes and ears in the local communities gives our ombudsmen the ability to work with our technical staff in addressing these frustration before they turn into major problems. In the interest of improving customer service, we're going to the problems instead of waiting for them to come to us."

Visits by ombudsmen to county commissions, communities and businesses across Missouri have helped put a face on the department. "Developers and builders will be happy for the opportunity to be heard," said Matt Morrow, executive officer of the Springfield Home Builders Association. "The Home Builders Association is very receptive to the ombudsman program."

Many of the ombudsmen success stories to date include finding answers to questions and resolving problems, often within a number of hours instead of days or weeks, for citizens, communities and businesses. "Sometimes it's as simple as directing someone outside the agency to the right program or staff person within the agency to address their concern," said Scott Totten, the department's chief ombudsman. "One constituent in southeast Missouri told us he was going to send all his problems to the ombudsman after we successfully resolved an issue for him."

Childers said the development of the program reflects a core belief that the ombudsmen can help the department improve the quality of life for Missouri citizens. "Many times I've heard the phrase 'Ignorance of the law is no excuse,'" said Childers. "As a former teacher and educator, I believe education and training go a long way to removing ignorance as an excuse. Today, there are better ways to provide a cleaner environment with less hassle and red tape for ordinary citizens."

One way the department is hoping to cut down on hassle and red tape is a compliance assistance initiative announced last week www.dnr.mo.gov/newsrel/nr05_459.htm. "We're surveying the new permit holders to determine if the visits were helpful and if solutions were

identified to any problems that might have been found," said Totten. "Because it's important to us that everyone's voice be heard, our ombudsmen will follow up with anyone who didn't return the survey to learn if there were any problems we might have missed."

Not learning about problems in time to correct them has led to a number of urban myths that the Department of Natural Resources is trying to debunk, according to Childers. "When we've delved into them, we've found these myths have mushroomed without much basis in fact," he said. "Is there room for improvement? Absolutely. However, the reality is we've provided good technical assistance in the past, but it's not well known to many people. Missourians have a right to expect good customer service from us, and I want people to know what a good job this agency does in protecting our air, land and water quality."

There are seven ombudsmen serving central, northwest, southeast and southwest Missouri as well as the Kansas City and St. Louis areas: Kansas City area - Judy Bowman (816-565-1296); St. Louis area - Mike Alesandrini (314-560-4703); Central Missouri - Jim Froelker (573-619-1410); Northeast Missouri - Don Summers (573-291-3055); Southeast Missouri - Jackson Bostic (573-619-1407); Southwest Missouri - Carrie Smith (573-619-1409); Southwest Missouri - Dave Woolery (417-619-1408).

For a map of the areas the ombudsmen serve, please visit our Web site at www.dnr.mo.gov/directory.htm - Ombudsman Map.

Expanded Satellite Offices

The department recently expanded its services to citizens in northwest, central and southeast Missouri through satellite offices in Maryville, Rolla and Portageville (the Delta Center). The department's new Field Services Division oversees the agency's five regional offices, 10 satellite offices, the Environmental Services Program, Environmental Assistance Office and other key field activities.

Maryville

The Missouri Department of Natural Resources and Northwest Missouri State University hosted a regional drinking water planning conference on the Northwest campus on Nov. 22, 2005. At the opening of the conference, a ribbon cutting was held for a new Department of Natural Resources satellite office, to be housed on the university's campus.

"Drinking Water for Northwest Missouri - A Conference for Planners" was hosted at the university with support provided by the department, State Representative Brad Lager, District 4, and the Northwest Missouri Regional Council of Governments. City and county officials and water facility operators from 12 northwest Missouri counties joined with legislators and state and federal agency representatives to discuss regional and local problems with drinking water supplies and distribution, aging treatment facilities and drinking water quality issues.

The conference began with a ribbon cutting to open the Department of Natural Resources' new Northwest Missouri Satellite Office. "The Northwest Missouri Satellite Office will place field staff who deal with northwest Missouri issues closer to their work," said Childers. "The generous cooperation of the university in providing a home for the office will help protect the environment of the region much more efficiently." The satellite office will be housed in the university's Environmental Services Building and will initially include two staff members who will provide nearby counties with facility inspections and compliance assistance services, focusing on assistance to drinking water and wastewater facilities.

The Northwest Missouri Satellite Office will complement and extend services provided to the region by the Kansas City Regional Office. It is part of department's newly created Field Services Division, which oversees five regional offices, seven other satellite offices, and the department's Environmental Services and Environmental Assistance Programs. The Northwest Satellite Office staff can be reached by phone at (660) 582-5210.

Rolla

The Department of Natural Resources opened its new Rolla Satellite Office Dec. 20, 2005. The Rolla Satellite Office complements and extends environmental services provided to the region by the department's Southeast Regional Office at Poplar Bluff. It will initially contain two environmental specialists, who will provide nearby counties with facility inspections and compliance assistance services. The office will likely grow as new area needs are identified. Staff of the new office will be housed with the Department's existing Division of Geology and Land Survey building on Fairgrounds Road in Rolla.

The Rolla office places department staff closer to the public and reduces response time and travel on issues in the Rolla, Fort Leonard Wood and Lake of the Ozarks areas. The Rolla Satellite Office staff can be reached by phone at (573) 368-3185.

Delta Center (Portageville)

Communities and businesses in Missouri's Bootheel will find environmental assistance a few steps closer as the Missouri Department of Natural Resources opened its new Delta Center Satellite Office Jan. 20, 2006. Staff of the new office are housed at the University of Missouri's Delta Research Center in Portageville. The department hosted an open house at the new office Friday, January 20, at the Delta Research Center, 147 State Highway T, just south of Portageville.

Department director Doyle Childers visited with guests attending the open house. "One of my greatest goals for the department is to serve communities and facilities more directly by placing more staff in the field," said Childers. "The Delta Center's gracious offer to provide space for a department staff member will help us get environmental help closer to where it is needed."

An environmental specialist stationed at the Delta Center office will provide facility inspections and other assistance to facilities in nearby counties, extending and enhancing environmental services provided to the region by the department's Southeast Regional Office at Poplar Bluff. The Delta Center Satellite Office staff can be reached by phone at (573) 379-5431.

What's coming in 2006 for Missouri's natural resources

Department must help citizens, businesses protect state's water, air, land

In his State of the State address this month, Gov. Blunt emphasized the importance of fiscal stability based on the economic strength of our communities. The Department of Natural Resources is a critical link in this chain.

Our citizens, communities and businesses depend on our work for clean water, clean air and productive land as the base for their quality of life, according to Department of Natural Resources Director Doyle Childers. "The Governor's leadership in making hard choices in 2005 has created a foundation based on education and job creation to fund the programs and services our citizens need," said Childers. "The shift from budget cuts to our first state budget

surplus in five years will allow us to pursue positive change that encourages economic development and job creation while carrying out our mission of protecting the environment.”

In his address, Gov. Blunt expressed his commitment to fully funding an ethanol incentive for Missouri. He also supports a Green Power Initiative, which would require motor fuel to contain 10 percent ethanol. “Both initiatives will spur economic development in Missouri and provide cleaner air for Missouri citizens,” said Childers. “These actions are good for Missouri consumers, farmers and the environment.”

When Childers was appointed in 2005, Gov. Blunt emphasized the need for the Department of Natural Resources to help citizens and businesses understand what they need to do to protect the environment. The department recently instituted a new compliance assistance initiative to help facility operators and businesses understand what they need to do to protect Missouri’s water, air and land resources.

Gov. Blunt’s goals for all state agencies, including the Department of Natural Resources, also include the continued efficient and responsible stewardship of tax dollars. In 2005, Childers reorganized the Department of Natural Resources to gain greater efficiencies and direction for responsible use of state tax dollars.

Also this year, the department demonstrated the responsible stewardship of state tax dollars in several ways. During 2005, the agency saved more than \$1 million by postponing the purchase of new vehicles, excluding emergency response vehicles. It also expanded golf cart use at Missouri’s 40 state park campgrounds, which reduces mileage on park vehicles and extends vehicle life.

“Using e-government initiatives has allowed us to streamline some of our services,” Childers said. “In just one example, using the Internet to provide training saved the department, and Missouri taxpayers, \$20,000.” The department is also actively pursuing other improvements to its permitting and enforcement processes. “We believe a faster, more comprehensive permitting process, in combination with our compliance assistance efforts, will enhance environmental protection and result in improved service to Missouri citizens, communities and businesses,” said Childers. This year, the department cut the time it took to issue some permits in half.

In addition to saving taxpayer dollars, the department improved many aspects of its customer service in 2005. Opening several small satellite offices across Missouri has cut down on travel time and improved the department’s response time to incidents. In 2005, the Department of Natural Resources opened satellite offices in Maryville and Rolla, in addition to a temporary office in Carthage. Plans to open a satellite office at the Delta Center in Portageville are under way in January 2006.

Created through its reorganization, the department’s Field Services Division makes staff more available to the citizens the department serves. In fiscal year 2005, the department’s field offices responded to more than 4,800 environmental concerns, inspected more than 6,500 facilities statewide and answered more than 3,050 requests for assistance from Missouri citizens, communities and businesses.

For More Information....

For news releases on the Web, visit www.dnr.mo.gov/newsrel. For a complete listing of the department's upcoming meetings, hearings and events, visit the department's online calendar at www.dnr.mo.gov/calendar/search.do.

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